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INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE

RHMFIS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 000454

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/14/2019

TAGS: PREL QA IR

SUBJECT: CROWN PRINCE ON QATAR'S RELATIONSHIP WITH IRAN

Classified By: Ambassador Joseph E. LeBaron, for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

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(C) KEY POINTS  
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-- In a July 14th meeting with Qatar's Crown Prince, Ambassador noted that Qatar's Chief of Staff for the Armed Forces had visited post-election Iran and that Iran's Parliament Speaker had traveled to Doha.

-- Tamim said the previously scheduled visit by the Chief of Staff had been long arranged, and it would have been "insulting to the Iranians" to cancel it.

-- On the Iranian election, Tamim said Iran's government and Iranian protesters had both crossed "red lines" following the election results. He noted that some of the results were released earlier than usual, suggesting some manipulation of them.

-- On Qatar's relationship with Iran, Tamim said engaging with Iran is better than isolating Iran. Qatar, which shares large natural gas reserves with Iran under the Gulf, has benefited from the bilateral dialogue established under former Iranian President Khatami.

-- That said, the Crown Prince stressed that maintaining the strategic relationship with the United States is the "number one priority" and that Qatar "will never change" that alignment.

-- The Crown Prince said the Amir plans to travel to New York for the opening of the UN General Assembly and hopes that President Obama will be able to meet with him at that time.

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(C) COMMENTS  
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-- We strongly recommend that President Obama meet with the Amir on the margins of the UNGA in New York. Even a relatively short meeting would do much to advance and deepen the bilateral relationship.

End Key Points and Comments.

¶1. (C) In a July 14 meeting, Ambassador asked Crown Prince Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani for his views on Iran following the recent Iranian presidential elections. Noting that Qatar's Chief of Staff for the Armed Forces had visited post-election Iran and Iran's Parliament Speaker had traveled to Doha, Ambassador asked how the United States should interpret these actions.

¶2. (C) Tamim responded that he had told the Chief of Staff not to delay his trip to Tehran because of the election turmoil. The previously scheduled visit had been long arranged, and it would have been "insulting to the Iranians"

to cancel it.

¶ 13. (C) Tamim underscored the importance to Qatar of having a "bridge" to Iran, noting that Qatar has benefited from having that bridge ever since former Iranian President Khatami opened a dialogue. Qatar, he maintained, has been "open with Iran," which is a big and important nation. Although Qatar and Iran disagree about many things, it is "better to get them on board than leave them alone."

¶ 14. (C) On the election, Tamim said Qatar disagreed with the way some Arab states had "interfered" in the Iranian election process. He said when a country like Iran is "bleeding," it is "not good to interfere at that stage." Washington, he said, should see Qatar's relationship with Iran as one of two neighboring countries that share vital natural gas reserves under the Gulf. The Iranians "appreciate that we remain committed neighbors."

¶ 15. (C) Tamim noted that the results were released on Friday night, not on Saturday or Sunday as is normal in Iran. Tamim said there were many "question marks" about the election results and the manipulation of them. The "Iranian Government crossed some red lines after the elections," in confronting its people. Iran has its own internal problems, but things could change for the better in Iran. Tamim said he expected "many changes in Iran "between now and the next election."

¶ 16. (C) Asked for his take on the continuing demonstrations, Tamim said it is "rubbish" that outside actors are behind the demonstrations in Iran. Returning to the crossing of "red

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lines" in Iran, Tamim noted that demonstrators' chanting "Death to Khamenei" was one such instance. Another was the protesters' refusal to stop demonstrating after Khamenei publicly called for an end to such displays.

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U.S. IS PRIORITY NUMBER ONE  
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¶ 17. (C) Ambassador asked the Crown Prince what he should tell Washington about Qatar's relationship with Iran. Tamim responded without hesitation, "Tell them there is no change. Having strategic relations with the United States is the number one priority for us. From our side, this will never change." While the United States and Qatar may disagree on issues, such as having relations with Iran, "Qatar's boycotting Iran will not hurt Iran but will hurt Qatar -- including our shared gas supply." Tamim closed by saying that "in the future" Qatar might be able to help the U.S. dialogue with Iran.

¶ 18. (C) Ambassador asked if the Amir intended to travel to New York for the opening of the UN General Assembly. The Crown Prince said in response, "so far he is definitely going." Tamim said the Amir would welcome the opportunity to meet with President Obama on the margins of the UNGA. He added that President Obama "would benefit from the Amir's realistic point of view from our work on the ground with several parties" in the Middle East.

LeBaron